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Groups of countries in special situations: specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation

Letter dated 4 October 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, I have the honour to transmit herewith the Declaration adopted at the Meeting of Heads of State or Government of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, held in Havana on 14 September 2006 (see annex).

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 56 (b).

(*Signed*) A'ounkeo **Kittikhoun**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
Chairman of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries

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Annex to the letter dated 4 October 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic addressed to the Secretary-General

Declaration of the Heads of State or Government of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)

We, the Heads of State or Government of Landlocked Developing Countries, meeting in Havana, Cuba, on 14th September 2006 on the margins of the XIV Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM),

Expressing the concern that landlocked developing countries face serious constraints and special challenges and are being increasingly marginalized in the multilateral trade and faced with declining market shares in the world trade,

Recalling the United Nations Millennium Declaration[1] adopted on 8 September 2000 in which the Heads of State and Government recognized the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries and urged both bilateral and multilateral donors to increase financial and technical assistance to this group of countries to meet their particular development needs and to help them overcome the impediments of geography by improving their transit transport systems,

Recalling also the Almaty Declaration[2] and the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries[3] adopted at the International Ministerial Conference on Transit Transport Cooperation (IMC), convened by the United Nations General Assembly in 2003 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, that was the first watershed event of the United Nations intended to forge a global partnership for addressing the special needs and the marginalization of landlocked developing countries,

Recalling further the 2005 World Summit Outcome[4] in which the special needs and challenges faced by landlocked developing countries were recognized along with reaffirmed commitments of the world leaders to urgently address those challenges by fully, timely and effectively implementing the Almaty Programme of Action,

Recalling the General Assembly resolutions 56/180 of 21 December 2001, 57/242 of 20 December 2002, 58/201 of 23 December 2003, 59/245 of 22 December 2004 and 60/208 of 22 December 2005,

Recalling also the Asuncion Platform for the Doha Development Round adopted at the Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Trade of Landlocked Developing Countries in 2005 in Asuncion, Paraguay[5],

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[1] See General Assembly resolution 55/2.
[2] A/CONF.202/3, annex II.
[3] Ibid., annex I.
[4] See General Assembly resolution 60/1.
[5] A/60/308, annex.

Expressing support to developing countries emerging from conflict, in particular landlocked developing countries, with a view to enabling them to rehabilitate and reconstruct, as appropriate, political, social and economic infrastructure and to assist them in achieving their development priorities in accordance with the goals and targets of the Almaty Programme of Action,

1. *Reaffirm* the right of access of landlocked countries to and from the sea and freedom of transit through the territory of transit countries by all means of transport, in accordance with international law.

2. *Reaffirm also* that transit countries, in the exercise of their full sovereignty over their territory, should take all measures necessary to ensure that the rights and facilities provided for landlocked developing countries are fully respected and granted in conformity with the Almaty Programme of Action.

3. *Commit* ourselves to establish genuine partnerships with our transit neighbors and our development partners at the national, bilateral, subregional, regional and global levels in order to attain the objectives of the Almaty Programme of Action.

4. *Emphasize* the need to establish dialogue between Governments of landlocked developing countries and business communities, aimed at increasing active involvement of the private sector in the process of implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

5. *Undertake* to continue implementing reforms addressing the priorities agreed upon in the Almaty Programme of Action while prioritizing and developing transit transport infrastructures within their national budget and overall economic development strategies. We are further dedicated to strengthening the commitment of national organizations and their full support and cooperation in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

6. *Emphasize* that landlocked developing countries depend on their transit neighbours for access to and from the sea, efficient transit systems require closer and effective cooperation and collaboration between landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours. *Express* our deep commitment to closely cooperate with our transit neighbours. In this context, regional economic groupings and transit agreements, as well as bilateral agreements, play a critical role in promoting transit transport cooperation. We are committed to the effective implementation of these agreements.

7. *Emphasize* that trade is essential for landlocked developing countries to generate resources for financing their growth and development. In this regard, *call on* the international community to give special consideration to the unique and very difficult problems confronted by landlocked developing countries in WTO negotiations on market access. Very high trade transaction costs nearly wipe out any profit margin gained by LLDCs from their participating in the international trade. Without support and special attention from international community, landlocked developing countries continue to be further marginalized in an increasingly globalized and competitive world economy. The WTO trade negotiations on trade facilitation are a most relevant and important issue for landlocked developing countries. *Stress* the need for increased technical assistance in capacity building in this area. *Underline* the importance of simplifying and harmonizing international trade procedures which are of even greater importance to LLDCs than to other countries, because of their needs to pass much of their merchandise trade at least one transit country. *Call on* development partners to give

priority in the implementation of the Aid-for-Trade initiatives by development partners so that they can effectively participate in WTO negotiations in pursuit of the Asuncion Platform for the Doha Development Round. *Express* concern over the suspension of WTO negotiations and *call for* an early resumption of the WTO negotiations on Doha Development Agenda.

8. *Stress* that the official development assistance has a critical role to play in support of establishing efficient transit transport systems as called for by the Almaty Programme of Action. Landlocked developing countries are in great need of financial assistance for the construction, maintenance and improvement of their transport, transit-related facilities, including alternative routes and improved communications. In this regard, it is urgent to identify "missing links" of transit transport infrastructures, and *urge* the international community to provide priority financial assistance to support efforts undertaken by LLDCs to link their transport infrastructure systems with the regional networks. The assistance should be urgently provided in the form of grants and most concessional loans.

9. *Call on* United Nations system organizations and other international organizations, particularly the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Regional Commissions, the United Nations Development Programme, World Bank, regional development banks, World Customs Organization and other international and regional organizations to redouble their efforts to assist landlocked and transit developing countries in implementing the Almaty Programme of Action.

10. *Request* the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), in accordance with the mandate given by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/227 of 24 December 2001 and in the Almaty Programme of Action, to enhance its coordination and cooperation with organizations within the United Nations system, particularly those engaged in operational activities on the ground in landlocked and transit developing countries and other relevant international organizations in order to assist in the full and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action in line with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

11. *Emphasize* the importance of the monitoring and systematic review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action for its success and *call for* a mid-term review to assess the progress made and to chart out further strategies to translate special actions called for in the Almaty Programme of Action into specific projects. The mid-term review should be conducted in the year 2008 and be preceded by relevant thematic and regional or subregional reviews.

12. *Request* the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to provide necessary preparations for the midterm review and coordinate and mobilize system-wide efforts within the United Nations for the successful organization of the process.

13. *Also request* the Secretary-General of the United Nations to undertake necessary measures to provide UN-OHRLLS with the necessary resources to enable it to carry out its tasks related to the mid-term review and other related mandates given by the General Assembly.

14. *Express* our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the Government and people of Cuba for their generous hospitality and all necessary facilities provided for the successful convening of this historic Meeting.